

Tips for City Trees, Fall & Winter 2002

Water your street tree

Even with the recent rain events, our area is still experiencing a drought. Please water your tree until the ground freezes as roots grow through the fall season. All street trees, especially new street trees, need deep watering. Water your tree thoroughly with approximately 20 gallons, or hand water by running a hose at low pressure for 20 minutes. During really hot weather, your tree will need 30 gallons of water each week, applied in 2 separate waterings: 15 gallons one day and 15 gallons a few days later. Please pour the water slowly into the pipe-grate protruding from the soil surface.

Winter mulch

Apply a fresh layer of mulch between 2 - 3 inches. Remember to leave a 3-inch circle of bare soil around the trunk. The Department of Public Works sponsors Seasonal Yard Waste Collection. Shredded leaves provide a suitable mulch layer. Mulching helps the soil retain moisture and also protects roots against extreme cold. When properly applied, the mulch will help keep the soil from freezing, insuring a steady supply of moisture to roots. Mulching should be applied following a hard freeze, not before. If you mulch too early in fall, this may prevent trees from becoming fully dormant. Trees that aren't dormant are much more susceptible to cold injury.

Planting under trees

The fall season is a good time to plant, particularly under deciduous trees. Plants will have time to develop their roots before the canopy develops in the spring. Cultivating the soil allows the tree's roots to easily access water and oxygen. However, do not add more than ½ - 1" of soil to the tree pit. Extra soil or mulch against the trunk can cause the bark to rot. Be careful when cultivating the soil; use a small hand shovel or fork. The roots of large trees take a longer time to recover from injury than the roots of a young tree.

Sand not Salt

Use sand instead of salt on sidewalks. Salt leaches into the soil and causes root damage. Other alternatives include manual removal of snow and ice and de-icing compounds with minimal effects on plants.